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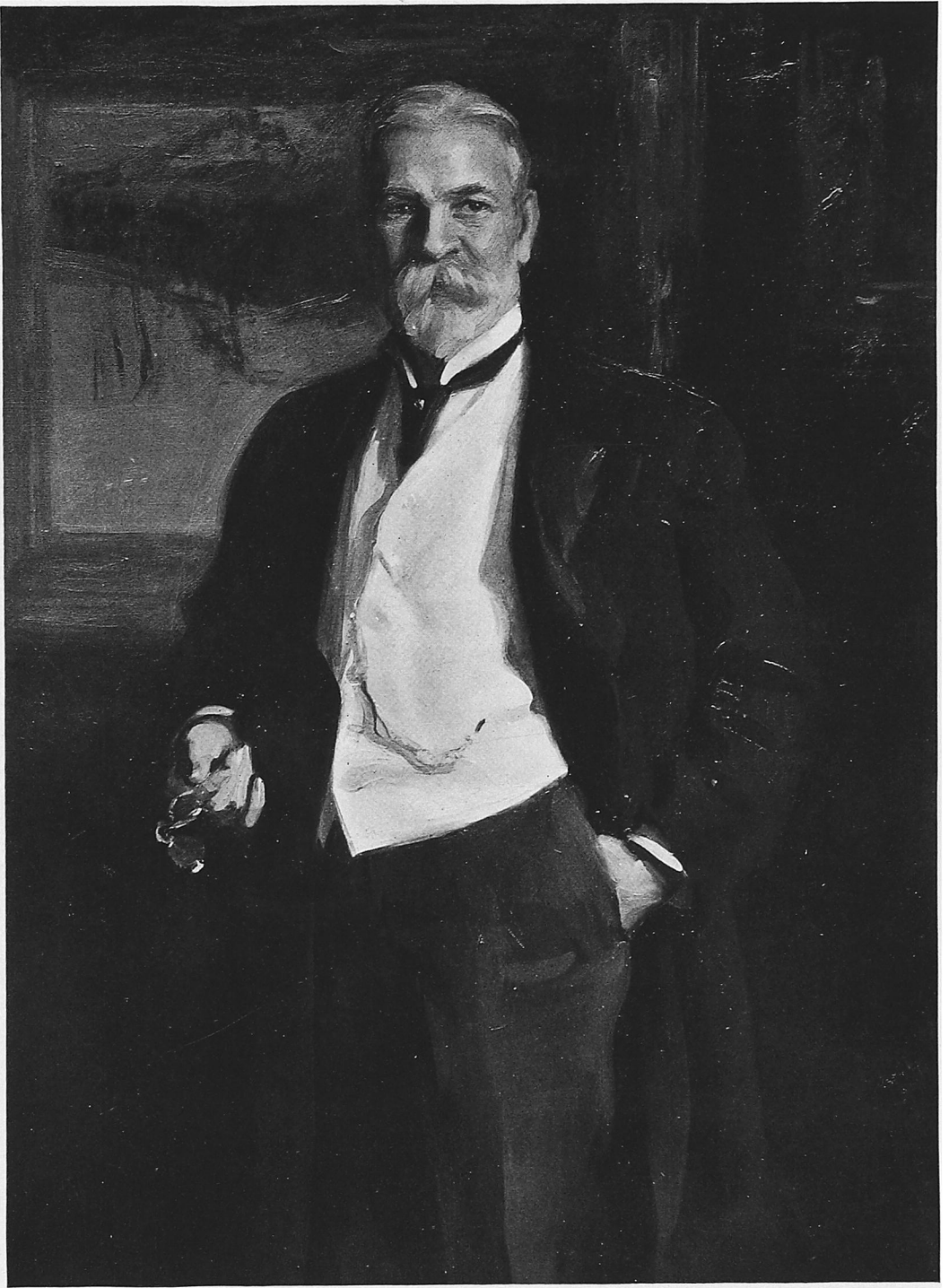
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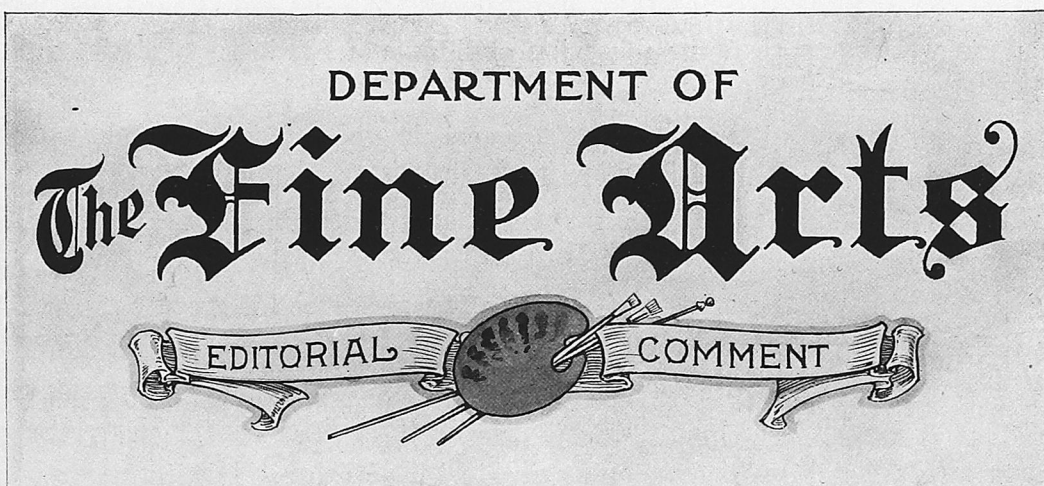
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WILLIAM M. R. FRENCH

Late Director Art Institute, Chicago

Painting By Betts



Vol. XXXI

CHICAGO, JULY, 1914

Number ONE

*The Contents of this issue
Copyrighted June, 1914.
By F. J. CAMPBELL, Publisher
[Published Monthly]*

*Entered at Chicago Post
Office as SECOND CLASS
MATTER, May 4th, 1900,
Under Act, March 3, 1879*

William Merchant Richardson French

By GISELLE D'UNGER

DISTINGUISHED for those rare qualities which make the scholar and the man, William Merchant Richardson French, late Director of the Art Institute of Chicago, has built an enduring monument for posterity and himself. Gifted with keen foresight, gracious of demeanor, generous of encouragement, Director French impressed all with his sincerity of purpose and loyal devotion to the institution which he established when Chicago was merely a prairie town on the border of Lake Michigan.

The founding of the Art Institute was not a simple matter as the stern necessities of civilization were far in excess of the aesthetic; but this great soul felt the impulse of the spiritual, appreciated that the material must be linked with the imaginative, that the finer threads of color and harmony must be woven with the warp and woof of industry in the tapestry that recites the deeds of a new province. With gentle persuasion, patient under restraint, possibly often discouraged at the slow process of a wondrous plan, which remained unseen by many who did not understand the significance of his efforts, the man who has given Chicago its greatest and most lasting

William Merchant Richardson French

honor, who has spread the most joyful tidings of Art in its highest forms, has left unto us a house desolate.

A great metropolis requires the service of great men and in her wondrous strides, Chicago has had need of William French. It was he who understood the underlying mental strata of her pioneers; he who affiliated with humanity in all its phases; he who recognized the dormant germ of genius in the artist and gave a strong impulse for greater endeavor with that kindly courtesy which fell like a benediction on youth and adult. William French was an artist innately and by profession. He possessed executive ability in so high a degree that business men were eager to recognize and assist him in developing an ideal institution. His knowledge of art was not only broad but profound; albeit he remained always the citizen, the man and brother, never exalting himself. It is given to few to retain, as did he, the admiration of a community for so long a period, and to formulate and inculcate a taste for the beautiful.

Successful artists by the scores attest to his training. Hundreds of men and women recall his witty and instructive lectures. Students of all ages and nationalities accord him honor in that he was ever the gentle mentor and distributor of loving encouragement. The church, the prisoner, the unfortunate and the depressed, ever found him sympathetic and practically helpful in finance and deed. As the candle-light, his deeds illumine "this naughty world" and stand as a beacon for those of whom we knew not. Many cry "he was my friend, faithful and just to me."

A great man with a great man's characteristics, simplicity, humility, generosity, truth, lofty ideals, self-sacrifice and tireless devotion to an unswerving purpose, William M. R. French requires no requiem of music nor words—the most eloquent tribute could not equal his life's work, the Art Institute of Chicago, and his interpretation of the Brotherhood of Man.

Of what avail is Grief when Beauty and Joy remain in pleasing, nay loving, remembrance? Of what avail is Sadness when Love crowns all!

"O, Death, where is thy sting, and O, Grave, where is thy victory?"